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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an evolving series of television programs that are designed to paint personal portraits capturing the thoughts, methods, theory, and practice of such major innovators in individualized instruction as Samuel N. Postelthwait and Fred S. Keller. The major purpose and potential benefits of this video history series are explained, as well as the implementation procedures and the basic concepts which have guided program development, e.g., the decision to use an interview format with the star of the show being interviewed by a panel of two or three educators. Two interrelated elements of project development are discussed: overall planning, which includes making global decisions about the nature of program content, and the production process itself. Future development and utilization of the programs produced are also addressed. Ten references are listed. (LMM)

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PRODUCING THE PAGES OF A VIDEO HISTORY

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Abstract

Recently both Postlethwait and Keller have been televised and recorded as part of an evolving TV series. The resulting videotapes are charming portraits that show these famous men interacting in a low-key setting with other innovative educators. A description of the personalized TV production process is offered. The potential value to future scholars of the TV series is discussed. The message to be developed is that there is an interweaving of personality and ideas in the development of ideals. The tapes show that both Keller and Postlethwait have a pioneer spirit which they radiate in person and which is evident in their achievements. The position is taken that individualization is a major development in the philosophical, theoretical, and scientific evolution of mankind's unrelenting effort to find better ways to teach and to learn. As an ideal, individualized instruction has had its major theorists and contributors. These are the people who have long advocated, promoted, and proliferated the concepts of individualized instruction. Appropriately, the authors of those concepts--Keller, Postlethwait and a few others--have become the "big names" in the field. And these pillars of the profession have each been such unique human beings that it is not enough to preserve their essence only through their writings.

Introduction

The idea of treating and teaching every student as an individual has been one of the most appealing as well as enduring notions throughout the history of education. However, as appealing as the idea of individualized instruction has been, practical and cost problems have consistently mitigated against implementation. Thus, individualized instruction has historically been perceived as more of an idealistic dream than a practical reality. Within the last generation the dreams of educators have begun to be realized. Due to the ideas and practices pioneered by a relatively few instructional innovators, individualized instruction has been defined and developed in several forms and can now be considered a practical concept in the designed delivery of instructional programs.

The contributors who have developed individualized instruction into a realistic possibility have, in many ways, altered the very structure of educational practice. The purpose of this paper is to describe and display an evolving series of programs that paint personal portraits which capture the thought, methods, theory and practice of these pacesetting educators who have impacted learning by individualizing instruction. In essence, this series will be a video history of the founders of individualized instruction. We will describe the major purposes of this series of programs, potential benefits, and implementation procedures as well as the basic concepts which have guided development. In addition, we will discuss the future development and utilization of the programs produced.

Basic Concepts

Our idea was to capture for posterity what might be called the "educational life and times" of major innovators in individualized instruction. After close inspection the personalities of these individuals can often be seen to be closely interwoven with their ideas. Frequently this relationship is made available in memoirs, biographies and autobiographies. However, the innovators in question have been such unique and charming human beings that it seems not enough to preserve their essence only through writings. Our intention has been to utilize modern technology to produce what we believe will be a more illustrative and focused portrait of those who have been so influential. In addition, we felt there was a need to develop a structured methodology for preparing this kind of material. That is, no clear structure exists to guide the development of illustrative material concurrently profiling the personality and the thought of educational innovators. Since our goal is to produce a

videotape series on these innovators, we felt the need to establish a consistent methodology to be utilized with all participants. Doing this, we believe, will enhance the comparability of the produced materials as well as insure that key elements of each innovator's "life and times" are adequately described and included in the material.

An early and basic decision was made to use an interview format with the star of the show being interviewed by a panel of two or three carefully chosen educators. The panel members were not simply interrogators, but also commentators chosen because they had applied, modified, and, in some cases, developed techniques for individualizing instruction. This format made better television than either a talking head or a simple question and answer session and, in addition, placed the guest and his innovative thinking firmly in the real world of higher education.

The aspirations and procedures described in this paper were first unveiled at the International Congress for Individualized Instruction (Braden and Sherman, 1979). The high level of interest shown by professionals dedicated to innovation and individualization was encouraging. In the judgement of the authors, if a full set of video history portraits of Skinner, Keller, Postlethwait, Gagné, Briggs, Mager and others were available today, they would be in high demand. Moreover, the demand for such materials would be likely to increase over time. Indeed, the list of theorists need not be restricted by small numbers, the age of the innovators, or strict dedication to individualization. Bloom, Piaget, Merrill, Popham, and ever so many others would be glowing additions to a video history collection.

Project Development

Our development process contains two interrelated elements. The first concerns overall planning, which includes making global decisions about the

nature of the content of the programs. The second component of the development procedure deals with the producing process, including such specific series planning decisions as the selection of innovators to be the subject of the tapes. Both elements are considered vital to the finished product in order to meet the goals of the total project.

Content

Several components were identified as vital for inclusion in the programs. These are the major planning foci for each of the programs completed:

1) the major beliefs of the innovator relative to education and learning;
2) the theoretical foundations of the innovator's ideas;
3) the critical incidents which led the innovators to develop their plan to individualize instruction;
4) the innovator's description of the plan, a description of the plan in practice, and a projection of the current and future impact of the innovation;
5) the innovator's general impression and critique of the positive and negative aspects of education;
6) the innovator's personality.

These general components serve to guide the content of each production. Because the overriding goal of the series is to showcase the innovators interacting naturally with ideas and with other educators, it is not possible to firmly prestructure content in productions of this kind. Instead, each program has been produced working toward content goals.

Production Process

There is no shortage of books and articles that offer guidelines for interviewing. Some of the material has been written for the interviewee; e.g.,

Stewart and Cash's (1974) advice on how to prepare for a successful job interview. The majority of the literature on interviewing, however, has been written for the prospective interviewer--usually slanted toward a particular interviewing purpose such as psychological counseling, criminal interrogation, and research methodologies. (See Siegman and Pope, 1972; Royal and Schutt, 1976; and Scott and Chanlett, 1973, for examples). As aids for TV interviewing the most useful items are those written for the journalistic interview. Brady (1976) in particular is a good example. Yet, *none of the mass of written material surveyed by these authors really focuses upon the educational TV interview and its particular procedures.* Johnny Carson isn't telling all. Donahue, Tom Snyder, Merv, David Frost and the 60 Minutes crew are there for us to see as examples, but as artists the colors that go onto their palettes are not revealed. Also, their purpose is first to entertain and then to inform. The priorities are reversed in video history taping.

Moreover, for the kind of video history wanted, an interview, *per se,* is not exactly what is required. The appropriate format seems to be a cross between interview and panel, but should not be formally structured as is the case with "Meet the Press" and similar programs.

Richetto and Zima (1976) explain rather well why the literature focuses upon one-on-one interviewing, "While there are such things as 'group interviews,' the interview usually falls within the broader context of two-party or 'dyadic' communication." As a result of this emphasis, the authors found it necessary to develop a unique set of guidelines for the interviews conducted during the production of these programs. A format was developed wherein one person is being informally interviewed by all of the other members of a group or panel.

Series Planning: Our action plan relative to insuring that each component was included in the productions interfaced with and guided the development of

the production process. For the initial programs, selection of an innovator was simple. We would work with the first available "big name." That turned out to be Samuel N. Postlethwait. Thereafter it was a matter of following our own process. In general, the process is a structured series of activities which define the production procedures. These activities have been collectively labeled as the Personalized TV Production Process (fig. 1). The sequence of activities can be varied somewhat within each of three linear categories: pre-taping activity, taping session activity, and post-taping activity. Each of the activities in the model contributed to the successful production of the programs.

Review Writings: The first step in working with the individual innovators is to review their more important written works. The purpose for this is, first, to enable those persons involved with production to converse articulately on each innovator's own ground; and second, to enable the program planners to take a selected quotation from an innovator's own work and ask that innovator to respond to it in retrospect. A review of the innovator's written work probably will disclose an appropriate piece of literature to take onto the set during taping. There the book or article can serve either as a prop--an artifact to be shown--or as a reference from which to read. For example, Postlethwait's Exploring Teaching Alternatives (1977) served as a successful prop for the first interview. Similarly, the book of PSI germinal papers edited by Sherman (1974), which included Keller's "Good-bye Teacher" (1968) and other Keller articles, was used during the Keller program as a reference known to both panel members and interviewee.

Observe Stage Performance: The second step is to observe the innovator perform, i.e., to see how that person makes a presentation in front of a large

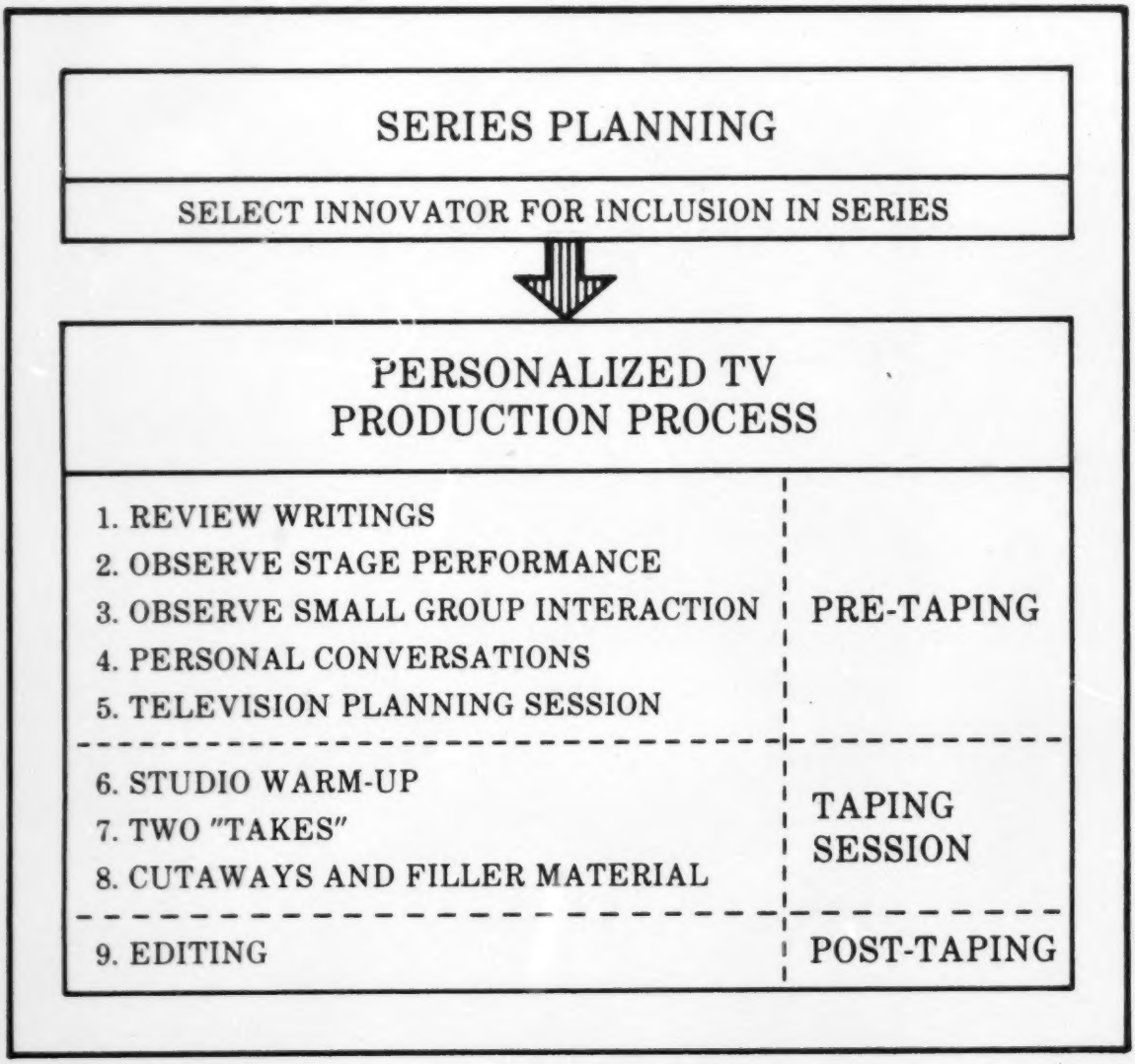

Figure 1. Personalized TV Production Process.

audience. The purpose for making such an observation is to see how the innovator reacts when "on stage."

Observe Small Group Interaction: Because people do not deal with large and small audiences in the same way, it is considered essential that the innovator be observed in small group interactions. This is particularly important since the actual videotaping is a small group interaction.

Personal Conversations: Each of the panel members who will be in the program is given an opportunity to deal with the innovator in a one-on-one conversation. This is done in a variety of informal settings and allows both the guest performer and the other panel members to achieve a high level of rapport prior to the time that they are on camera.

Television Planning Session: The purpose of the TV planning session is to bring all of the people who will be on the panel together with the producer and director to talk about both the content and the process of the television production. It is an occasion when all of the prior information-gathering about the guest performer is discussed so as to select the best ways to elicit those opinions which bear most directly upon that person's uniqueness as a contributor to education.

Studio Warmup: During the studio warmup session, all of the panelists, including the guest performer, take their places on the television stage. At that time, a normal conversation is undertaken, and all of the principles have an opportunity to become acclimated to the situation. Also the conversation can be turned to professional topics so that when taping begins, the train of thought of the participants is already upon the topics which will be discussed.

Two "Takes": The reason for doing two complete takes, i.e., two productions, is that the unstructured format provides segments of uneven interest. The final

videotape will be edited to take out the low interest segments. It can be expected, for example, that the participants, even though warmed up, will be somewhat awkward or stilted in their initial conversations. As a result, much of the initial take may not survive editing. As time passes on the set, all of the participants eventually get into a very natural conversational flow. Thus, the production of a second videotape is likely to produce images of the innovator when there is no apparert camera consciousness.

Cutaways and Filler Materials: After the two takes have been completed, the participants remain on the TV stage and continue informal conversation. At this time the television cameramen concentrate upon people who are not talking rather than upon the speaker as they do during program taping. This facilitates the selection of tape footage of individuals reacting to the speech of others. Reaction footage is a particularly important resource for the last step, which is editing.

Editing: The editing phase is one of carefully reviewing all of the taped materials and selecting those parts of it which are most germane to the objectives of the series and then carefully re-structuring them so that the finished program has continuity.

Conclusion

These programs have several rather obvious benefits and some which are not so apparent. Among the more obvious is the existence of a public record which presents the innovators and their ideas in a modern manner. They are the beginnings of a video history. Each shows an innovator as a real person, and the essence of the innovator's ideas are available for examination by students and scholars. These products, then, may serve both heuristic and historical functions for those attempting to understand the individualization movement.

Practically, these programs may be used as content material in courses on instructional design as well as courses on individualized instruction.

These modules are also useful for a flexible series of faculty development materials. They can not only inform faculty members of the innovative techniques, but also assist in persuading that they are designed to help faculty members solve their own instructional problems rather than to serve as rigid prescriptions imposed by some external "educational authority."

Less obvious, but equally important, is the opportunity these materials provide to other innovators about the process of generating and implementing new ideas in education. The lives and work of these innovators may provide a clue to the necessary dedication and persistence necessary to move from the traditional to the innovative. Thus, these materials may be generative in that they foster the growth and development of new strategies which may further revolutionize the practice of education.

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NOTE:

Copies of the videotapes described in this paper have been deposited in the AECT archives. Send inquiries to:

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